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AN ACCOUNT OF THE SEMINARY

That will be opened

On MONDAY the Fourth Day of AUGUST,

At EPSOM in SURREY,

For the INSTRUCTION of

TWELVE PUPILS

IN

The GREEK, LATIN, FRENCH, and ENGLISH Languages.

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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
SEMINARY, &c.

THE two principal objects of human power are government and education. They have accordingly engroſſed a very large ſhare in the diſquiſitions of the ſpeculative in all ages. The ſubject of the former indeed is man, already endowed with his greateſt force of body, and arrived at the exerciſe of his intellectual powers: the ſubject of the latter is man, as yet ſhut up in the feebleneſs of childhood, and the imbecility of inexperience. Civil ſociety is great and unlimited in its extent; the time has been, when the whole known world was

in a manner united in one community: but the ſphere of education has always been limited. It is for nations to produce the events, that enchant the imagination, and ennoble the page of hiſtory: infancy muſt always paſs away in the unimportance of mirth, and the privacy of retreat. That government however is a theme ſo much ſuperior to education, is not perhaps ſo evident, as we may at firſt imagine.

It is indeed wider in its extent, but it is infinitely leſs abſolute in its power. The ſtate of ſociety is inconteſtibly artificial; the power of one man over another muſt be always derived from convention, or from conqueſt; by nature we are equal. The neceſſary conſequence is, that government muſt always depend upon the opinion of the governed. Let the moſt oppreſſed people under heaven once change their mode of thinking, and they are free. But the inequality of parents and children is the law of our

nature, eternal and uncontrolable.—— Government is very limited in its power of making men either virtuous or happy; it is only in the infancy of ſociety that it can do any thing conſiderable; in its maturity it can only direct a few of our outward actions. But our moral diſpoſitions and character depend very much, perhaps entirely, upon education.—Children indeed are weak and imbecil; but it is the imbecility of ſpring, and not that of autumn; the imbecility that verges towards power, and not that is already exhauſted with performance. To behold heroiſm in its infancy, and immortality in the bud, muſt be a moſt attractive object. To mould thoſe pliant diſpoſitions, upon which the happineſs of multitudes may one day depend, muſt be infinitely important.

Proportionable to what we have ſtated to be the importance of the ſubject, is the attention that has been afforded it in the republic of letters. The brighteſt

wits, and the profoundeſt philoſophers have emulated each other in their endeavours to elucidate ſo valuable a theme. In vain have pedants urged the ſtamp of antiquity, and the approbation of cuſtom; there is ſcarcely the ſcheme ſo viſionary, the execution of which has not at ſome time or other been attempted. Of the writers upon this intereſting ſubject, he perhaps that has produced the moſt valuable treatiſe is Rouſſeau. If men of equal abilities have explored this ample field, I know of none, however, who have ſo thoroughly inveſtigated the firſt principles of the ſcience, or who have treated it ſo much at large. If he have indulged to a thouſand agreeable viſions, and wandered in the purſuit of many a ſpecious paradox, he has however richly repaid us for this defect, by the profoundeſt reſearches, and the moſt ſolid diſcoveries.

I have borrowed ſo many of my ideas from this admirable writer, that I thought it

it neceſſary to make this acknowledgement in the outſet. The learned reader will readily perceive, that if I have not ſcrupled to profit from his diſcoveries, at leaſt I have freely and largely diſſented from him, where he appeared to me to wander from the path of truth. For my own part, I am perſuaded that it can only be by ſtriking off ſomething of inflexibility from his ſyſtem, and ſomething of pedantry from the common one, that we can expect to furniſh a medium, equally congenial to the elegance of civilization, and the manlineſs of virtue.

In purſuance of theſe principles it ſhall be my firſt buſineſs to enquire, whether or not the languages ought to make any part of a perfect ſyſtem of education; and if they ought, at what time they ſhould be commenced. The ſtudy of them does indeed ſtill retain its ground in our public ſchools and univerſities. But it has received a rude

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ſhock from ſome writers of the preſent age; nor has any attack been more formidable, than that of the author of Emile. Let us endeavour to examine the queſtion, neither with the cold prejudice of antiquity on the one hand; nor on the other, with the too eager thirſt of novelty, and unbounded admiration of the geniuſes, by whom it has been attacked.

When we look back to the venerable ancients, we behold a claſs of writers, if not of a much higher rank, at leaſt of a very different character, from the moderns. One natural advantage they indiſputably poſſeſſed. The field of nature was all their own. It had not yet been blaſted by any vulgar breath, or touched with a ſacrilegious hand. Its faireſt flowers had not been culled, and its choiceſt ſweets rifled before them. As they were not encumbered and hedged in with the multitude of their predeceſſors, they did not ſervilely borrow their know-

knowledge from books; they read it in the page of the univerſe. They ſtudied nature in all her romantic ſcenes, and all her ſecret haunts. They ſtudied men in the various ranks of ſociety, and in different nations of the world. I might add to this ſeveral other advantages. Of theſe the noble freedom of mind that was characteriſtic of the republicans of Greece and Rome, and that has ſcarcely any parallel among ourſelves, would not be the leaſt.

Agreeably to theſe advantages, they almoſt every where, particularly among the Greeks, bear upon them the ſtamp of originality. All copies are feeble and unmarked. They ſacrifice the plainneſs of nature to the gaudineſs of ornament, and the tinſel of wit. But the ancients are full of a noble and affecting ſimplicity. By one touch of nature and obſervation they paint a ſcene more truly, than their ſucceſſors are able to do in whole wire-drawn pages. In deſcription they

they are unequalled. Their eloquence is fervent, manly and ſonorous. Their thoughts are juſt, natural, independent and profound. The pathos of Virgil, and the ſublimity of Homer, have never been ſurpaſſed. And as their knowledge was not acquired in learned indolence, they knew how to join the ſevereſt application with the brighteſt genius. Accordingly in their ſtyle they have united ſimplicity, eloquence and harmony, in a manner of which the moderns have ſeldom had even an idea. The correctneſs of a Cæſar, and the ſonorous period of a Cicero; the majeſty of a Virgil, and the politeneſs of a Horace, are ſuch as no living language can expreſs.

It is the remark of a certain old-faſhioned writer, "The form of the world paſſeth away." A century or two ago the greateſt wits were known to have pathetically lamented, that the writers, of whoſe merits I have been ſpeaking, were handed down to us in ſo mutilated a condition.

dition. Now it ſeems very probable, that, if their works were totally annihilated, it would ſcarcely call forth a ſigh from the refined geniuſes of the preſent age. It is certainly very poſſible to carry the paſſion for antiquity to a ridiculous extreme. No man can reaſonably deny, that it is by us only that the true ſyſtem of the univerſe has been aſcertained, and that we have made very valuable improvements upon many of the arts. No man can queſtion that ſome of our Engliſh poets have equalled the ancients in ſublimity, and that, to ſay the leaſt, our neighbours, the French, have emulated the elegance of their compoſition in a manner, that is very far indeed from contempt. From theſe conceſſions however we are by no means authoriſed to infer their inutility.

But I ſhall be told that in the firſt revival of letters the ſtudy of the ancient languages might indeed be very proper;

but ſince that time we have had ſo many excellent tranſlations of every thing they contain, that to waſte the time, and exhauſt the activity of our youth in the learning of Latin and Greek, is to very little purpoſe indeed. Tranſlation! what a ſtrange word! To me I confeſs it appears the moſt unaccountable invention, that ever entered into the mind of man. To diſtil the glowing conceptions, and to traveſty the beautiful language of the ancients, through the medium of a language eſtranged to all its peculiarities and all its elegancies. The beſt thoughts and expreſſions of an author, thoſe that diſtinguiſh one writer from another, are preciſely thoſe that are leaſt capable of being tranſlated. And who are the men we are to employ in this promiſing buſineſs? Original genius diſdains the unmeaning drudgery. A mind that has one feature reſembling the ancients, will ſcarcely ſtoop to be their tranſlator. The perſons then, to whom the performance

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muſt be committed, are perſons of cool elegance. Endowed with a little barren taſte, they muſt be inanimate enough to tread with laborious imbecility in the footſteps of another. They muſt be eternally incapable of imbibing the ſpirit, and glowing with the fire of their original. But we ſhall ſeldom come off ſo well as this. The generality of tranſlators are either on the one hand mere pedants and dealers in words, who, underſtanding the grammatical conſtruction of a period, never gave themſelves the trouble to enquire, whether it conveyed either ſentiment or inſtruction; or on the other hand mere writers for hire, the retainers of a bookſeller, men who tranſlate Homer from the French, and Horace out of Creech.

Let it not be ſaid that I am now talking at random. Let us deſcend to examples. We need not be afraid of inſtancing in the moſt favourable. I be-

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lieve it is generally allowed that Mr. Pope's Iliad is the very beſt verſion that was ever made out of one language into another. It muſt be confeſſed to exhibit very many poetical beauties. As a trial of ſkill, as an inſtance of what can be effected upon ſo forlorn a hope, it muſt ever be admired. But were I to ſearch for a true idea of the ſtyle and compoſition of Homer, I think I ſhould rather recur to the verbal tranſlation in the margin of the original, than to the verſion of Pope. Homer is the ſimpleſt and moſt unaffected of poets. Of all the writers of elegance and taſte that ever exiſted, his tranſlator is the moſt ornamented. We acknowledge Homer by his looſe and flowing robe, that does not conſtrain a muſcle of his frame. But Pope preſents himſelf in the cloſe and ungraceful habit of modern times;

"Glittering with gems, and ſtiff with woven gold."

No, let us for once conduct ourſelves with honeſty and generoſity. If we will not

not ſtudy the ancients in their own nervous and manly page, let us cloſe their volumes for ever. I had rather, ſays the amiable philoſopher of Chaeronea, it ſhould be ſaid of me, that there never was ſuch a man as Plutarch, than that Plutarch was ill-natured, arbitrary, and tyrannical. And were I the bard of Venuſia, ſure I am, I had rather be entirely forgotten, than not be known for the polite, the ſpirited, and the elegant writer I really was.

To converſe with the accompliſhed, is the obvious method by which to become accompliſhed ourſelves. This general obſervation is equally applicable to the ſtudy of polite writers of our own and of other countries. But there are ſome reaſons, upon account of which we may expect to derive a more perceptible advantage from the ancients. They carried the art of compoſition to greater heights than any of the moderns. Their

writers were almoſt univerſally of a higher rank in ſociety, than ours. There did not then exiſt the temptation of gain to ſpur men on to the profeſſion of an author. An induſtrious modern will produce twenty volumes, in the time that Iſocrates employed to poliſh one oration.

Another argument flows from the ſimple circumſtance of their writing in a different language. Of all the requiſites to the attainment either of a ſtyle of our own, or a diſcernment in that of others, the firſt is grammar. Without this, our ideas muſt be always vague and deſultory. Reſpecting the delicacies of compoſition, we may gueſs, but we can never decide and demonſtrate. Now, of the minutiæ of grammar, ſcarcely any man ever attained a juſt knowledge, who was acquainted with only one language. And if the ſtudy of others be the ſureſt, I will venture alſo to pronounce it the eaſieſt

eaſieſt method for acquiring a maſtery in philology.

From what has been ſaid, I ſhall conſider this concluſion as ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, that the languages ought at ſome time to be learned by him who would form to himſelf a perfect character. I proceed to my ſecond enquiry, at what time the ſtudy of them ſhould be commenced? And here I think this to be the beſt general anſwer: at the age of ten years.

In favour of ſo early a period one reaſon may be derived from what I have juſt been mentioning. The knowledge of more languages than one, is almoſt an indiſpenſible prerequiſite to the juſt underſtanding either of the ſubject of grammar in particular, or of that of ſtyle in general. Now if the cultivation of elegance and propriety be at all important, it cannot be entered upon

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too ſoon, provided the ideas are already competent to the capacity of the pupil. The Roman Cornelia, who never ſuffered a provincial accent, or a grammatical barbariſm in the hearing of her children, has always been cited with commendation; and the ſubſequent rhetorical excellence of the Gracchi has been in a great degree aſcribed to it. Fluency, purity and eaſe are to be acquired by inſenſible degrees; and againſt habits of this kind I apprehend there can be no objection.

Another argument of ſtill greater importance is, that the knowledge of languages has ſcarcely ever been maſtered, but by thoſe, the commencement of whoſe acquaintance with them was early. To be acquainted with any ſcience ſlightly and ſuperficially, can in my opinion be productive of little advantage. But ſuch an acquaintance with languages muſt be very uſeleſs indeed. What benefit can

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it be expected that we ſhould derive from an author, whom we cannot peruſe with facility and pleaſure? The ſtudy of ſuch an author will demand a particular ſtrength of reſolution, and aptitude of humour. He can ſcarcely become the favourite companion of our retirement, and the never-failing ſolace of our cares. Something of ſlow and ſaturnine muſt be the neceſſary accompaniment of that diſpoſition, that can conquer the difficulties of ſuch a purſuit. And accordingly we find that the claſſics and the ſchool are generally quitted together, even by perſons of taſte, who have not acquired a competent maſtery of them in their courſe of education. Very few indeed have been thoſe, who, eſtranged to the languages till the age of manhood, have after that period obtained ſuch a familiarity with them, as could ever be productive of any conſiderable advantage.

Brutes and ſavages are totally unacquainted with laſſitude and ſpleen, the luſt of variety, and the impatience of curioſity. In a ſtate of ſociety our ideas habitually ſucceed in a certain proportion, and an employment that retards their progreſs, ſpeedily becomes diſagreeable and tedious. But children, not having yet felt this effect of civilization, are not ſuſceptible to this cauſe of diſguſt. They are endowed with a pliableneſs and verſatility of mind, that with a little attention and management may eaſily be turned to any purſuit. Their underſtandings not yet preoccupied, they have a ſingular facility of apprehending, and ſtrength of retention. It is certain this pliableneſs and facility are very liable to abuſe. It is not eaſy to believe, that they were given to learn words without meaning; terms of art, not underſtood by the pupil; the ſyſtems of theologians, and the jargon of metaphyſics. But then neither were they given without a capacity

city of being turned to advantage. And it ſhould ſeem that it could not be a very fallacious antidote to abuſe, to confine our inſtructions to ſuch kinds of knowledge, as are of the higheſt importance, and are ſeldom learned with ſucceſs, and even ſcarcely attainable, at any other period.

Let it be obſerved that I have not fixed upon the age of ten years at random. It is the obſervation of Rouſſeau; Both children and men are eſſentially feeble. Children, becauſe however few be their wants, they are unable to ſupply them. Men, in a ſtate of ſociety, becauſe whatever be their abſolute ſtrength, the play of the imagination renders their deſires yet greater. There is an intermediate period, in which our powers having made ſome progreſs, and the artificial and imaginary wants being unknown, we are relatively ſtrong. And this he repreſents as the principal period

of inſtruction. This remark is indeed ſtill more ſtriking, when applied to a pupil, the progreſs of whoſe imagination is ſedulouſly retarded. But it is not deſtitute either of truth or utility in the moſt general application we can poſſibly give it. Let it be obſerved, that Rouſſeau fixes the commencement of this period at twelve years. I would chooſe to take it at ten.

However we may find it convenient to diſtribute the productions of nature into claſſes, and her operations into epochas, yet let it be remembered, that her progreſs is ſilent and imperceptible. Between a perfect animal and vegetable, the diſtinction is of the higheſt order. Between diſtant periods we may remark the moſt important differences. But the gradations of nature are uninterrupted. Of her chain every link is compleat. As therefore I ſhall find in commencing at ten years, that my time will be barely

ſufficient for the purpoſes to which I would appropriate it, I conſider this circumſtance as ſufficient to determine my election. A youth of ten years is omnipotent, if we contraſt him with a youth of eight.

But if the languages conſtitute ſo valuable a part of a juſt ſyſtem of education, the next queſtion is, in what manner they are to be taught. Indeed, I believe, if the perſons employed in the buſineſs of education had taken half the pains to ſmooth the acceſs to this department of literature, that they have employed to plant it round with briars and thorns, its utility and propriety, in the view we are now conſidering it, would ſcarcely have been queſtioned.

There is ſomething neceſſarily diſguſting in the forms of grammar. Grammar therefore is made in our public ſchools the buſineſs of a twelvemonth.

Rules

Rules are heaped upon rules with laborious ſtupidity. To render them the more formidable, they are preſented to our youth in the very language, the firſt principles of which they are deſigned to teach. For my own part, I am perſuaded the whole buſineſs of grammar may be diſpatched in a fortnight. I would only teach the declenſions of nouns, and the inflexions of verbs. For the reſt, nothing is ſo eaſily demonſtrated, as that the auxiliary ſciences are beſt communicated in connection with their principals. Chronology, geography, are never ſo thoroughly underſtood, as by him that treats them literally as the handmaids of hiſtory. He, who is inſtructed in Latin with clearneſs and accuracy, will never be at a loſs for the rules of grammar.

But to complete the diſguſt we ſeem ſo careful to inſpire, the learned languages are ever ſurrounded with the ſeverity

verity of diſcipline; and it would probably be thought little ſhort of ſacrilege to diſcompoſe their features with a ſmile. Such a mode of proceeding can never be ſufficiently execrated.

Indeed, I ſhall be told, "this is the "time to correct the native vices of the "mind. In childhood the influence of "pain and mortification is comparatively "trifling. What then can be more ju-"dicious than to accumulate upon this "period, what muſt otherwiſe fall with "tenfold miſchief upon the age of ma-"turity?" In anſwer to this reaſoning, let it be firſt conſidered, how many there are, who by the ſentence of nature are called out of exiſtence, before they can live to reap theſe boaſted advantages. Which of you is there, that has not at ſome time regretted that age, in which a ſmile is ever upon the countenance, and peace and ſerenity at the bottom of the heart? How is it you can conſent to

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deprive theſe little innocents of an enjoyment, that ſlides ſo faſt away? How is it you can find in your heart to pall theſe fleeting years with bitterneſs and ſlavery? The undeſigning gaiety of youth has the ſtrongeſt claim upon your humanity. There is not in the world a truer object of pity, than a child terrified at every glance, and watching, with anxious uncertainty, the caprices of a pedagogue. If he ſurvive, the liberty of manhood is dearly bought by ſo many heart aches. And if he die, happy to eſcape your cruelty, the only advantage he derives from the ſufferings you have inflicted, is that of not regretting a life, of which he knew nothing but the torments.

But who is it that has told you, that the certain, or even the probable conſequences of this ſeverity are beneficial? Nothing is ſo eaſily proved, as that the human mind is pure and ſpotleſs, as it came from the hands of God, and that the

the vices of which you complain, have their real ſource in thoſe ſhallow and contemptible precautions, that you pretend to employ againſt them. Of all the conditions to which we are incident, there is none ſo unpropitious to whatever is ingenuous and honourable, as that of a ſlave. It plucks away by the root all ſenſe of dignity, and all manly confidence. In thoſe nations of antiquity, moſt celebrated for fortitude and heroiſm, their youth had never their haughty and unſubmitting neck bowed to the inglorious yoke of a pedagogue. To borrow the idea of that gallant aſſertor of humanity, ſir Richard Steele: I will not ſay that our public ſchools have not produced many great and illuſtrious characters; but I will aſſert, there was not one of thoſe characters, that would not have been more manly and venerable, if they had never been ſubjected to this vile and ſordid condition.

Having thus ſet aſide the principal corruptions of modern education, the deviſing methods for facilitating the acquiſition of languages will not be difficult. The firſt books put into the hands of a pupil ſhould be ſimple, intereſting, and agreeable. By their means, he will perceive a reaſonableneſs and a beauty in the purſuit. If he be endowed by nature with a clear underſtanding, and the ſmalleſt propenſity to literature, he will need very little to ſtimulate him either from hope or fear.

Attentive to the native gaiety of youth, the periods, in which his attention is required, though frequent in their returns, ſhould in their duration be ſhort and inoppreſſive. The pupil ſhould do nothing merely becauſe he is ſeen or heard by his preceptor. If he have companions, ſtill nothing more is requiſite, than that degree of ſilence and order, which ſhall hinder the attention of any from being involun-

involuntarily diverted. The pupil has nothing to conceal, and no need of falſehood. The approbation of the preceptor reſpects only what comes directly under his cognizance, and cannot be diſguiſed. Even here, remembering the volatility and ſprightlineſs, inſeparable from the age, humanity will induce him not to animadvert with warmth upon the appearances of a caſual diſtraction, but he will rather ſolicit the return of attention by gentleneſs, than ſeverity.

But of all rules, the moſt important is that of preſerving an uniform, even tenour of conduct. Into the government of youth paſſion and caprice ſhould never enter. The gentle yoke of the preceptor ſhould be confounded as much as poſſible, with the eternal laws of nature and neceſſity. The celebrated maxim of republican government ſhould be adopted here. The laws ſhould ſpeak, and the magiſtrate be ſilent. The conſtitution

ſhould be for ever unchangeable and independent of the character of him that adminiſters it.

Nothing can certainly be more abſurd than the attempt to educate children by reaſon. We may be ſure they will treat every determination as capricious, that ſhocks their inclination. The *chef d'œuvre* of a good education is to form a reaſonable human being; and yet they pretend to govern a child by argument and ratiocination. This is to enter upon the work at the wrong end, and to endeavour to convert the fabric itſelf into one of the tools by which it is conſtructed. The laws of the preceptor ought to be as final and inflexible, as they are mild and humane.

There is yet another method for facilitating the acquiſition of languages, ſo juſt in itſelf, and ſo univerſally practicable, that I cannot forbear mentioning it.

it. It is that of commencing with the modern languages, French for inſtance in this country. Theſe in the education of our youth, are univerſally poſtponed to what are ſtiled the learned languages. I ſhall perhaps be told that modern tongues being in a great meaſure derived from the Latin, the latter is very properly to be conſidered as introductory to the former. But why then do we not adopt the ſame conduct in every inſtance? Why to the Latin do we not premiſe the Greek, and to the Greek the Coptic and Oriental tongues? Or how long ſince is it, that the ſynthetic has been proved ſo much ſuperior to the analytic mode of inſtruction? In female education, the modern languages are taught without all this preparation; nor do I find that our fair rivals are at all inferior to the generality of our ſex in their proficiency. With the youth of ſenſe and ſpirit of both ſexes, the learning of French is uſually conſidered, rather as a pleaſure, than

than a burden. Were the Latin communicated in the ſame mild and accommodating manner, I think I may venture to pronounce, that thus taken in the ſecond place, there will be no great difficulty in rendering it equally attractive.

I would juſt obſerve that there is an obvious propriety in the French language being learned under the ſame direction, as the Latin and Greek. The purſuit of this elegant accompliſhment ought at no time to be entirely omitted. But the attention of youth is diſtracted between the method of different maſters, and their amiable confidence, in the direction under which they are placed, entirely ruined by mutability and inconſtance. The ſame obſervation may alſo be applied here, as in the learned languages. The attention of the pupil ſhould be confined as much as poſſible to the moſt claſſical writers; and the French would furniſh a moſt uſeful ſubſidiary in a courſe of hiſtory.

hiſtory. Let me add, that though I have preſcribed the age of ten years, as the moſt eligible for the commencement of claſſical education, I conceive there would be no impropriety in taking up the modern language ſo early as nine.

Such then is the kind of ſubjection, that the learning of languages demands. The queſtion that recurs upon us is; How far this ſubjection may fairly be conſidered as exceptionable, and whether its beneficial conſequences do not infinitely outweigh the trifling inconveniences that may ſtill be aſcribed to it?

But there is another ſubject that demands our conſideration. Modern education not only corrupts the heart of our youth, by the rigid ſlavery to which it condemns them, it alſo undermines their reaſon, by the unintelligible jargon with which they are overwhelmed in the firſt inſtance, and the little attention, that

that is given to the accommodating their purſuits to their capacities in the ſecond.

Nothing can have a greater tendency to clog and deſtroy the native activity of the mind, than the profuſeneſs with which the memory of children is loaded, by nurſes, by mothers, by maſters. What can more corrupt the judgment, than the communicating, without meaſure, and without end, words entirely devoid of meaning? What can have a more ridiculous influence upon our taſte, than for the firſt verſes to which our attention is demanded, to conſiſt of ſuch ſtrange and uncouth jargon? To complete the abſurdity, and that we may derive all that elegance and refinement from the ſtudy of languages, that it is calculated to afford, our firſt ideas of Latin are to be collected from ſuch authors, as Corderius, Eraſmus, Eutropius, and the Selectæ. To begin indeed with the claſſical writers, is not the way

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to ſmooth the path of literature. I am of opinion however, that one of the above-mentioned authors will be abundantly ſufficient. Let it be remembered, that the paſſage from the introductory ſtudies to thoſe authors, that form the very eſſence of the language, will be much facilitated by the previous acquiſition of the French.

Having ſpoken of the article of memory, let me be permitted to mention the practice, that has of late gained ſo great a vogue; the inſtructing children in the art of ſpouting and acting plays. Of all the qualities incident to human nature, the moſt univerſally attractive is ſimplicity, the moſt diſguſting is affectation. Now what idea has a child of the paſſions of a hero, and the diſtreſſes of royalty? But he is taught the moſt vehement utterance, and a thouſand conſtrained cadences, without its being poſſible that he ſhould ſee in them, either reaſonableneſs or propriety.

I would not have a child required to commit any thing to memory more than is abſolutely neceſſary. If, however, he be a youth of ſpirit, he will probably learn ſome things in this manner, and the ſooner becauſe it is not expected of him. It will be of uſe for him to repeat theſe with a grave and diſtinct voice, accommodated to thoſe cadences, which the commas, the periods, and the notes of interrogation, marked in his author, may require, but without the ſmalleſt inſtruction to humour the gay, or to ſadden the plaintive.

Another article, that makes a conſpicuous figure in the education of our youth, is compoſitiõn. Before they are acquainted with the true difference between verſe and proſe, before they are prepared to decide upon the poetical merit of Lily and Virgil, they are called upon to write Latin verſe themſelves. In the ſame manner ſome of their firſt

proſe compoſitions are in a dead language. An uniform, petty, ridiculous ſcheme is laid down, and within that ſcheme all their thoughts are to be circumſcribed.

Compoſition is certainly a deſirable art, and I think can ſcarcely be entered upon too ſoon. It ſhould be one end after which I would endeavour, and the mode of effecting it will be farther illuſtrated in the ſequel, to ſolicit a pupil to familiarity, and to induce him to diſcloſe his thoughts upon ſuch ſubjects as were competent to his capacity, in an honeſt and ſimple manner. After having thus warmed him by degrees, it might be proper to direct him to write down his thoughts, without any preſcribed method, in the natural and ſpontaneous manner, in which they flowed from his mind. Thus the taſk of throwing his reflections upon paper would be facilitated to him, and his ſtyle gradually

formed, without teaching him any kind of reſtraint and affectation. To the reader who enters at all into my ideas upon the ſubject, it were needleſs to ſubjoin, that I ſhould never think of putting a youth upon the compoſition of verſe.

From all I have ſaid it will be ſufficiently evident, that it would be a conſtant object with me to model my inſtructions to the capacity of my pupil. They are books, that beyond all things teach us to talk without thinking, and uſe words without meaning. To this evil there can be no complete remedy. But ſhall we aboliſh literature, becauſe it is not unaccompanied with inconveniencies? Shall we return to a ſtate of ſavage ignorance, becauſe all the advantages of civilization have their attendant diſadvantages?

The only remedy that can be applied, is to accuſtom ourſelves to clear and accurate

curate inveſtigation. To prefer, where-ever we can have recourſe to it, the book of nature to any human compoſition. To begin with the latter as late as may be conſiſtent with the moſt important purpoſes of education. And when we do begin, ſo to arrange our ſtudies, as that we may commence with the ſimpleſt and eaſieſt ſciences, and proportion our progreſs to the underſtanding of the pupil.

With reſpect to grammar in particular, the declenſions of nouns, and the inflexions of verbs, we may obſerve, that to learn words to which abſolutely no ideas are affixed, is not to learn to think looſely, and to believe without being convinced. Theſe certainly can never corrupt the mind. And I ſuppoſe no one will pretend, that to learn grammar, is to be led to entertain inaccurate notions of the ſubjects, about which it is particularly converſant. On the contrary,

trary, the ideas of grammar are exceedingly clear and accurate. It has, in my opinion, all thoſe advantages, by which the ſtudy of geometry is uſually recommended, without any of its diſadvantages. It tends much to purge the underſtanding, to render it cloſe in its inveſtigations, and ſure in its deciſions. It introduces more eaſily and intelligibly than mathematical ſcience, that moſt difficult of all the mental operations, abſtraction. It imperceptibly enlarges our conceptions, and generaliſes our ideas.

But if to read its authors, be the moſt valuable purpoſe of learning a language, the grammar will not be ſufficient. Other books will be neceſſary. And how ſhall theſe be choſen, ſo as not to leave behind us the underſtanding of our pupil? Shall we introduce him firſt to the ſublime flights of Virgil, the philoſophical inveſtigations of a Cicero, or the refined

elegance

elegance and gay ſatire of Horace? Alas! if thus introduced unprepared to the nobleſt heights of ſcience, how can it be expected that his underſtanding ſhould eſcape the ſhipwreck, and every atom of common ſenſe not be daſhed and ſcattered ten thouſand ways?

The ſtudy then I would here introduce, ſhould be that of hiſtory. And that this ſtudy is not improper to the age with which I connect it, is the ſecond point I would endeavour to demonſtrate.

But is hiſtory, I ſhall be aſked, the ſtudy ſo proper for uninſtructed minds? Hiſtory, that may in ſome meaſure be conſidered as concentring in itſelf the elements of all other ſciences? Hiſtory, by which we are informed of the riſe and progreſs of every art, and by whoſe teſtimony the comparative excellence of every art is aſcertained? Hiſtory, the very

very teſtimony of which is not to be admitted, without the previous trial of metaphyſical ſcrutiny, and philoſophic inveſtigation? Laſtly, Hiſtory, that is to to be conſidered as a continual illuſtration of the arts of fortification and tactics; but above all of politics, with its various appendages, commerce, manufacture, finances?

To all this, I calmly anſwer, No: it is not hiſtory in any of theſe forms, that conſtitutes the ſcience to which I would direct the attention of my pupil. Of the utility of the hiſtory of arts and ſciences, at leaſt, as a general ſtudy, I have no very high opinion. But were my opinion ever ſo exalted, I ſhould certainly chuſe to poſtpone this ſtudy for the preſent. I ſhould have as little to do with tactics and fortification. I would avoid as much as poſſible the very ſubject of war. Politics, commerce, finances, might eaſily be deferred. I would keep

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far aloof from the niceties of chronology, and the diſpute of facts. I would not enter upon the ſtudy of hiſtory through the medium of epitome. I would even poſtpone the general hiſtory of nations, to the character and actions of particular men.

Many of the articles I have mentioned, ſerve to compoſe the pedantry of hiſtory. Than hiſtory, no ſcience has been more abuſed. It has been ſtudied from oſtentation; it has been ſtudied with the narrow views of little minds; it has been warped to ſerve a temporary purpoſe. Ingenious art has hung it round with a thouſand ſubtleties, and a thouſand diſputes. The time has at length arrived, when it requires an erect underſtanding, and a penetrating view, above the common rate, to diſcover the noble purpoſes, which this ſcience is moſt immediately calculated to ſubſerve.

In a word, the fate of hiſtory has been like that of travelling. The inſtitution has been preſerved, but its original uſe is loſt. One man travels from faſhion, and another from pride. One man travels to meaſure buildings, another to examine pictures, and a third perhaps to learn to dance. Scarcely any remember that its true application is to ſtudy men and manners. Perhaps a juſter idea cannot be given of the ſcience we are conſidering, than that which we may deduce from a reflection of Rouſſeau. "The "ancient hiſtorians," ſays he, "are "crowded with thoſe views of things, "from which we may derive the utmoſt "utility, even though the facts that "ſuggeſt them, ſhould be miſtaken. But "we are unſkilled to derive any real ad- "vantage from hiſtory. The critique of "erudition abſorbs every thing; as if it "imported us much whether the relation "were true, provided we could extract "from it any uſeful inſtruction. Men "of

" of ſenſe ought to regard hiſtory as a
" tiſſue of fables, whoſe moral is per-
" fectly adapted to the human heart."

The mere external actions of men are not worth the ſtudying: Who would have ever thought of going through a courſe of hiſtory, if the ſcience were compriſed in a ſet of chronological tables? No: it is the hearts of men we ſhould ſtudy. It is to their actions, as expreſſive of diſpoſition and character, we ſhould attend. But by what is it that we can be advanced thus far, but by ſpecious conjecture, and plauſible inference? The philoſophy of a Salluſt, and the ſagacity of a Tacitus, can only advance us to the regions of probability. But whatever be the moſt perfect mode of hiſtorical compoſition, it is to the ſimpleſt writers that our youth ſhould be firſt introduced, writers equally diſtant from the dry detail of Du Freſnoy, and the unrivalled eloquence of a Livy. The tran-

ſlation of Plutarch would, in my opinion, form the beſt introduction. As he is not a writer of particular elegance, he ſuffers leſs from a verſion, than many others. The Roman revolutions of Vertot might very properly fill the ſecond place. Each of theſe writers has this further recommendation, that, at leaſt, in the former part of their works, they treat of that ſimplicity and rectitude of manners of the firſt Greeks and Romans, that furniſh the happieſt ſubject that can be deviſed for the initiating youth in the ſtudy of hiſtory.

Under the reſtrictions I have laid down, hiſtory is of all ſciences the moſt ſimple. It has been ever conſidered by philoſophers, as the porch of knowledge. It has ever been treated by men of literature, as the relaxation of their ſeverer purſuits. It leads directly to the moſt important of all attainments, the knowledge of the heart. It introduces us, without expence, and without danger, to

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an acquaintance with manners and ſociety. By the moſt natural advances it points us forward to all the depths of ſcience. With the moſt attractive blandiſhments it forms us by degrees to an inextinguiſhable thirſt of literature.

But there is ſtill an objection remaining, and that the moſt important of all. Let hiſtory be ſtripped as much as you will of every extraneous circumſtance, let it be narrowed to the utmoſt ſimplicity, there is ſtill one ſcience previouſly neceſſary. It is that of morals. If you ſee nothing in human conduct, but purely the exterior and phyſical movements, what is it that hiſtory teaches? Abſolutely nothing; and the ſcience devoid of intereſt, becomes incapable of affording either pleaſure or inſtruction. We may add, that the more perfectly it is made a ſcience of character and biography, the more indiſpenſible is ethical examination. But to ſuch an examination it has been doubted whether the underſtandings of

children

children be competent. Upon this queſtion I will beg leave to ſay a few words, and I have done.

It is ſcarcely neceſſary to obſerve, that I do not ſpeak here of ethics as an abſtract ſcience, but ſimply as it relates to practice, and the œconomy of human life. Our enquiry therefore is reſpecting the time at which that intuitive faculty is generally awakened, by which we decide upon the differences of virtue and vice, and are impelled to applaud the one, and condemn the other.

The moment in which the faculty of memory begins to unfold itſelf, the man begins to exiſt as a moral being. Not long poſterior to this, is the commencement of preſcience and foreſight. Rouſſeau has told us, in his animated language, that if a child could eſcape a whipping, or obtain a paper of ſweetmeats, by promiſing to throw himſelf out at window tomorrow, the promiſe would inſtantly be

be made. Nothing is more contrary to experience than this. It is true, death, or any ſuch evils, of which he has no clear conception, do not ſtrongly affect him in proſpect. But by the view of that which is palpable and ſtriking, he is as much influenced as any man, however extenſive his knowledge, however large his experience. It is only by ſeizing upon the activity and earneſtneſs incident to youthful purſuits, and totally baniſhing the idea of what is future, that we can deſtroy its influence. Their minds, like a ſheet of white paper, are ſuſceptible to every impreſſion. Their brain, uncrouded with a thouſand confuſed traces, is a cauſe, that every impreſſion they receive is ſtrong and durable.

The æra of foreſight is the æra of imagination, and imagination is the grand inſtrument of virtue. The mind is the ſeat of pleaſure and pain. It is not by what we ſee, but by what we infer and ſuppoſe, that we are taught, that any being

ing is the object of commiseration. It is by the constant return of the mind to the unfortunate object, that we are strongly impressed with sympathy. Hence it is that the too frequent recurrence of objects of distress, at the same time that it blunts the imagination, renders the heart callous and obdurate.

The sentiment that the persons about us have life and feeling as well as ourselves, cannot be of very late introduction. It may be forwarded by cultivation, but it can scarcely at any rate be very much retarded. For this sentiment to become perfectly clear and striking, and to be applied in every case that may come before us, must undoubtedly be an affair gradual in its progress. From thence to the feelings of right and wrong, of compassion and generosity, there is but one step.

It has, I think, been fully demonstrated by that very elegant philosopher Mr. Hutcheson,

Hutcheſon, that ſelf-love is not the ſource of all our paſſions, but that diſintereſted benevolence has its ſeat in the human heart. At preſent it is neceſſary for me to take this for granted. The diſcuſſion would lead me too far from my ſubject. What I would infer from it is, that benevolent affections are capable of a very early commencement. They do not wait to be grafted upon the ſelfiſh. They have the larger ſcope in youthful minds, as ſuch have not yet learned thoſe refinements of intereſt, that are incident to perſons of longer experience.

Accordingly no obſervation is more common, than that mankind are more generous in the earlier periods of their life, and that their affections become gradually contracted the farther they advance in the vale of years. Confidence, kindneſs, benevolence, conſtitute the entire temper of youth. And unleſs theſe amiable diſpoſitions be blaſted in the bud

by the baneful infuſions of ambition, vanity and pride, there is nothing with which they would not part, to cheriſh adverſity, and remunerate favour.

Hence we may infer, that the general ideas of merit and character are perfectly competent to the underſtanding of children of ten years. Falſe glory is the fartheſt in the world from inſinuating its witchraft into the undepraved heart, where the vain and malignant paſſions have not yet erected their ſtandard. It is true, the peculiar ſublimities of heroiſm cannot be ſuppoſed perfectly within his comprehenſion. But ſomething of this ſort, as we have already ſaid, is incident to every ſtep in the ſcale of literature.

But the more perfectly to familiariſe to my pupil the underſtanding and digeſting whatever he read, I would conſider it as an indiſpenſible part of my buſineſs, to talk over with him familiarly

liarly the ſubjects, that might neceſſarily demand our attention. I would lead him by degrees to relate with clearneſs and preciſion the ſtory of his author. I would induce him to deliver his fair and genuine ſentiments upon every action and character that came before us. I would frequently call upon him for a plain and ſimple reaſon for his opinion. This ſhould always be done privately, without oſtentation, and without rivalſhip. Thus, ſeparate from the danger of fomenting thoſe paſſions of envy and pride, that prepare at a diſtance for our youth ſo many mortifications, and at the expence of which too frequently this accompliſhment is attained, I would train him to deliver his opinion upon every ſubject with freedom, perſpicuity and fluency. Without at any time dictating to him the ſentiments it became him to entertain, I might, with a little honeſt artifice, mould his judgment into the form it was moſt deſirable it ſhould take, at the ſame time that I diſcovered

his genius, and aſcertained the original propenſities of his mind.

It is unneceſſary for me to ſay any thing reſpecting morals in the other ſenſe of the word, I mean as they are connected with the conduct, the habits of which we ſhould endeavour to cultivate in a pupil; as that ſubject has been already exhauſted. The vices of youth ſpring not from nature, who is equally the kind and blameleſs mother of all her children; they derive from the defects of education. We have already endeavoured to ſhut up all the inlets of vice. We have precluded ſervility and cowardice. We have taken away the motives to concealment and falſhood. By the liberal indulgence we have preſcribed, we have laid the foundation of manly ſpirit, and generous dignity. A continual attention to hiſtory, accompanied with the cultivation of moral diſcernment, and animated with the examples of heroic virtue, could not fail to form the heart

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of the pupil, to all that is excellent. At the ſame time, by aſſiduous care, the ſhoots of vanity and envy might be cruſhed in the bud. Emulation is a dangerous and miſtaken principle of conſtancy. Inſtead of it I would wiſh to ſee the connection of pupils, conſiſting only of pleaſure and generoſity. They ſhould learn to love, but not to hate each other. Benevolent actions ſhould not directly be preached to them, they ſhould ſtrictly begin in the heart of the performer. But when actually done, they ſhould receive the moſt diſtinguiſhed applauſe.

Let me be permitted in this place to obſerve, that the aſſociation of a ſmall number of pupils ſeems the moſt perfect mode of education. There is ſurely ſomething unſuitable to the preſent ſtate of mankind, in the wiſhing to educate our youth in perfect ſolitude. Society calls forth a thouſand powers both of mind and body, that muſt otherwiſe

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ſuſt in inactivity. And nothing is more clear from experience, than that there is a certain tendency to moral depravation in very large bodies of this kind, to which there has not yet been diſcovered a ſufficient remedy.

If, by the purſuit of principles like theſe, the powers of the underſtanding and the heart might be developed in concert; if the pupils were trained at once to knowledge and virtue; if they were enabled to look back upon the period of their education, without regretting one inſtance of anxious terror, or capricious ſeverity; if they recollected their tutor with gratitude, and thought of their companions, as of thoſe generous friends whom they would wiſh for the aſſociates of their life,—in that caſe, the pains of the preceptor would not be thrown away.

FINIS.

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